



smooth green snake

Opheodrys vernalis

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Colubridae

Features

The smooth green snake ranges from 12 to 20 inches long. It has a green back and a white or yellow-white belly. The scales are smooth. Occasionally, individuals are light brown or tan instead of green.

Natural History

This fragile snake was associated with prairie marshes throughout Iowa at one time. It eats slugs, spiders, and insects. It sometimes climbs into shrubs for basking or foraging. It is active during the day, hiding under rocks, boards, or grasses at night. It is believed to overwinter in small mammal burrows. Mating may occur in spring or fall. The female deposits five to 15 eggs in rotten logs, decaying vegetation, or leaf litter. Eggs are laid in July and August. More than one female may deposit eggs in the same nest. Hatching occurs in August or early September. It is believed to be limited to small isolated populations across all but the western edge of Iowa.

Habitats

natural lakes and prairie marshes; wet prairies and fens

Iowa Status

threatened; native

Loss of prairie marshes has eliminated habitat for the smooth green snake.

Iowa Range

statewide except the western edge of Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.